

## Small Cockatoo Reader's Stories

### Bird owners share thier small cockatoo story

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Sasha  
Courtesy Beth Verville, Connecticut

I am owned by a 3-year-old galah cockatoo named Sasha. She came to our family flock as our "honeymoon." My fiancé, Clint and I were planning our wedding and our honeymoon when we went to our local avian haunt. I saw this gorgeous bird and I could not put her down. Most times I can walk away, but she captivated me and soothed my very agitated bride-to-be soul. We left empty handed, and about two hours later, I turned to Clint and declared, "I am going to name her Sasha." He said it was her or the honeymoon, and I figured Memphis can wait. We called the store and began the arrangements to bring home our new baby girl. I was so excited about her, I included her in my bridal portrait, and everyone asks if she's real!

Now she helps with just about everything and even tries to train our rescued Amazon, Boogie. We were stick training him with Step up and whenever he got it right, she'd repeat in rapid fire succession "Step up, Step up, Step up!" She's such a smart alec! She loves to dance and hide in fleece blankets, but most of the time she's content to be wherever you are. She loves to travel and likes to watch over the cockatiels and our lovebird as well.

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Armani  
Courtesy Amiee Johnson, California

I met my rose-breasted cockatoo, Armani, when I was in Hawaii visiting friends. We were at the local mall, and I stopped into a local bird store to look. There he was, in a cage that was way too small for him. He was 4 years old at the time, and they said that he had been abused. He had been kicked out of his home for being too noisy. I later found out from my vet that he had been a previous feather-picker and had picked out all his down feathers underneath on the bottom of his chest. He didn't have a single follicle left there and will never grow them back. Luckily, his other feathers are thick and cover it up to keep him warm.

I asked to hold him, and knew that I had to take him home with me! After a quick stop to the vet, we flew home to California. We have been together ever since. He is 12 years old now, and the best friend I could ever have! He has not plucked a day in his life since I have owned him. Don't get me wrong, there have been road-blocks along the way. Manni was aggressive toward other people for a long time, especially when my husband came into the picture. I think it was out of fear and territorialism. We worked with him for a long time. Now, he sits on the couch with both of us, lets my husband scratch his head and lets my friend Christine walk right up to him and pet him!

He loves to tell everyone what a "Pretty bird" he is! He is extremely intelligent and uses words in context. He likes learning tricks as well. I'm so glad that he came into my life. He has always been there no matter what mood I'm in. He was such a comfort when my mother recently died of brain cancer. He sat right there with me, empathetically sighing right along with me. The moral of our story is that just because a bird is older or because it may have behavioral problems, does not disqualify it from being a valuable companion. I wouldn't trade my Manni for anything!

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Daisy & Calvin  
Courtesy Marla Joi Federici Ferguson, Florida

My husband, Chris, and I had a cockatiel and she passed away. The house was incredibly lonely and quiet without her. We decided, after a few weeks, that we were ready to start shopping around for our new bird, notice that this is not plural. We had no idea what we were getting ourselves into. We ended up at Chief's Bird Cabin in Orlando, Florida one weekend in December 2005. We knew we wanted a cockatoo, and they only had one type of cockatoo in at that time, the bare-eyed. There were two little tiny babies that had white and pink porcupine-like spikes for feathers. One of them cried

uncontrollably and the other one was so quiet and calm. We picked Daisy. We visited about three times a week – every week so that, once she was weaned and we took her home, she would already be familiar with us. Every time we went to Chief's Bird Cabin to visit, the ladies would let us pick her up. After a while, as they got a little older, when we were taking Daisy out, Calvin would jump onto our hand or arm also. He got to know us just as well as Daisy. Months went by, and it was finally time for us to take Daisy home. Calvin the cry baby was crying, crying, crying as we took her out and trying to jump onto my arm and go with us too. It was breaking our hearts. We just had to get the both of them! And, we couldn't be happier. And that is the story of how we ended up with two bare-eyed cockatoos that are now our lives. We base everything we do around them and love every second of it!

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**Spike**  
Courtesy Linda Costello, Ohio

Spike, my little lesser-sulphur crested cockatoo, loves nothing better than being close to Tiki, an umbrella cockatoo. Spike was given to me by the same man who gave me Tiki. Seems he got Spike from the pet shop where Tiki had also been. Spike adores Tiki and will plaster his little body right against hers and stay right there while she preens him for hours. He is in birdie heaven. They would even go in and out of one another's cages and could be caged together, that is until recently. Tiki has taken to over-preening poor little Spike, so now I have to put them in separate cages to sleep at night or when I am gone from home. I feel bad for having to separate them but I do try to make up for it by letting them spend time together when I am home and can oversee the situation. A sparse crest and bare cheeks are just not that appealing on little Spike.

Poor little Spike. It seems he wants nothing more in life than to be loved and mothered by Tiki. Like the time when he caught his toe on the towel as he jumped off my lap when I was trimming his nails. It was bleeding so I tried packing it with flour and putting pressure on it

I called a nearby veterinarian. Although she doesn't normally see birds, I called her because I thought she could at least put something on it to stop the bleeding while I held him for her. But I left the message on her answering machine. While waiting on her return call the bleeding stopped and clotted. All turned out well as Spike cuddled up close with Tiki and together they babied his poor little toe.

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**Shadowfax**  
Courtesy Wendy Ermold, Washington

My little cockatoo is a lesser-sulphur crested named Shadowfax, after Ghandolf's horse. He turned 1 year old last month and is growing up into a fine young beautiful loving handful of a bird. He always wants to be with us and comes bounding down the hall after us if we leave the room. He loves to be loved. He especially likes it when all four of our hands are him. His wings relax so we can get under them, and he goes "boneless." His whole body relaxes, with his head resting down flat on a leg, eyes closed. Adorable!

And wow, what a little trouble maker! Once he got hold of my wallet while I was napping. He took every last thing out, including my car key. The key has (well, had) this little security chip embedded in the top. Shadow managed to remove it. I didn't know what it was for, so I was confused when my car suddenly wouldn't start. Turns out the chip needs to send a signal to the car before it will start. I wasn't able to leave the house that day, so it worked out really well for Shadow.

He really yammers up a storm, too. He doesn't have too many decipherable words yet, but he says his name, "Good Bird," "What are you birds doing?" "Where going?" and he especially likes to announce the coming of the evening crows with, "Those crows! Those crows!" He has my laugh and has pretty good timing with it too. He laughs when we're talking about some trouble he's gotten into, or may consider getting into, and he laughs along with us a lot, too. We love him like crazy. He's like a little kid.

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**Aussie**  
Courtesy Kristian Kaufman, South Carolina

My mother has dealt with my love of birds since my first, a budgie named Banjo that I got at the age of 5. Banjo traveled the country as we moved, and lived to be 10 years old. Now, as an adult, I still have my love for birds and share my life with several species. My mom, who remained curious about my feathered family after pet-sitting for us, finally took the plunge into the wonderful world of birds a couple of years ago. It took several months after the heart-wrenching loss of her young Illiger's macaw before my mother finally was willing to open her heart and home to a new feathered friend, an adorable Goffin's cockatoo chick she named Aussie. Aussie hatched on April 4th at a friend's aviary, and I convinced my mother to meet me and have a look at this baby. Least to say, Mom's heart was healed immediately once her eyes fell over this little ball of pin-feathers with big bright eyes. I've hand-fed babies for many years, so Aussie came home with me until Mom could take over at one feeding a day. Aussie is now 4 months old and one of the most well-adjusted birds I've ever been around. She's become my mom's best friend. However, this little gem of a bird loves everyone – male or female, adult or child. She's just the sweetest little thing and is absolutely wonderful around my 5-year-old niece and 2-year-old nephew. She's so smart and already is talking. She says, "Hello," "Goodnight" and "I love you." The happiness that Aussie has brought my mother truly is a gift. The healing power of these feathered gems is amazing. When I'm on the phone with my mom, it's "Aussie did this" and "Aussie did that." I couldn't be happier for my mom.

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Winston  
Courtesy Kim O'Toole, Pennsylvania

My small cockatoo is a rose-breasted I call Winston. He is our little entertainer to say the least. He has been sharing our home since he was just 5 months old and he's now a little over 2 years old. He traveled a long way from Oregon to Pennsylvania to join our family. When I picked him up at the airport, he came right to the front of his crate to greet me and say, "Hello!" He has learned so many words and phrases that continue to grow weekly. Winston greets us with a "Good Morning," "Gimme a Kiss" and "I love you" in that sweet little voice of his every day. When the lights go out in the evening he tells us, "Night, night." He is always calling my daughter, "Kaitlyn" and asking, "Where's Kaitlyn?" as if he needs to tell her something very important. When the phone rings he answers with a, "Hello" or joins along and adds a few extra rings. He is constantly calling my dogs and asking us, "Whatcha doin'?" Too funny! As much as I am his primary caretaker and I'm the one who brought him to our family, my daughter is his favorite person. Isn't it funny how they always choose their favorites? Oh well, we all love him just the same.

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Irwin  
Courtesy Claudia Hill, Arizona

He sits in his cage, staring through the bars at a world without hope, a world where there is no one he can trust, a world of pain and fear. He is a Goffin's cockatoo. Irwin is his name now, but before it was Bidy, a name that made him flinch and cower. This is his fourth home, at least. He has lived here for three years, and though he has come to trust his humans enough to allow himself to be picked up, the terrified thrumming of his heart vibrates through his little body. He is given toys to play with, including lots of wooden toys to chew up, but he will only play if he is sure he is not being observed. He has an extensive vocabulary, but he will only speak if no one can see him. He will not take a treat from a hand and cowers in the farthest corner of his cage if he is offered one.

When he first came to this home, he was mute. A year passed before he made a single sound, and there was great celebration when, at last, he gave a harsh cockatoo scream. He is still mostly silent, but he will call out for the human members of his flock if they stay out of sight for long. Occasionally, he makes a small contented cluck, and this is the only sound he will exchange with his human.

Once, Irwin was a typical cockatoo, noisy, rambunctious and affectionate. He loved to come out and play with his humans and cuddle with them when he was tired. How was he changed from that sweet, loving chatterbox, to this wounded angel? There's no way to know. Can he learn to trust again? Only time will tell. There may be a happy ending to Irwin's story, but that ending is not yet.

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Ruffles

Courtesy Janice Williams, Massachusetts

Ruffles, my lesser-sulphur crested cockatoo, is the love of my life. We met in the most unusual way. About five years ago, I would always go to a local neighborhood pet shop to pick up supplies for my parakeets. One day, I went to buy seed and it was closed. No big deal, I would try again another day. I came many times, all different hours, it was always closed. Each time I went, I noticed this sulphur crest, jumping around in her cage, going crazy trying to get my attention. I peaked in to the window and noticed how dirty her cage was. No food and no water. I looked at other cages of small animals, and they were the same. No one had been in there for quite some time. Dust was piling up on the counters. So I went to the town hall got the name of the owner, and found out she just moved to another state. A family member was trying to sell off what was left. I immediately called her. She met me at the shop. There was Ruffles. As soon as I walked in and made eye contact, I knew I had to have her. She was so thin. The care takers stated she couldn't sell her because she bites. I bought her and took her home. I was a little fearful when I brought her home. I was used to parakeets. So I opened her door, she came out, sat on her door. I fed and watered her. She said, "Here's Ruffles!" I laughed so hard, and she laughed so hard. That was the beginning of our relationship.

The next day I had to go to work. She saw me packing my stuff and as I started to walk out and she screamed, "Wait, Come Back!" I went back in, and talked to her, I reassured her I would be back later. I could sense she was scared. She had that panic look in her eyes, I felt so bad. She let me scratch her head, I kept telling her I had to go to work and I would come back. Tearfully, I left for work, Hearing her scream "Wait come Back!" crushed me. I returned home from work as soon as I could. As soon as I walked, in she started to jump up and down and said, "Here's Ruffles." We have been together since. She is neurotic about being left alone, even five years later, I reassure her every time I leave the house. My vacations are geared to places I can take her. She is my best friend, and the love of my life. She wasn't a mean bird. She is cute, funny and cuddly. She loves getting new toys, mashed potatoes and doughnuts. She is so smart and has a large vocabulary. She has never been locked in her cage except when we travel.

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Danico Ian (Danni)  
Courtesy Debbie Lesh, South Carolina

I had been searching for a cockatoo about two years ago and came across a beautiful cockatoo in a local pet shop that was smaller than the others I had seen.

Danico Ian is about 10-inches tall and has a white beak. He resembles a lesser-sulphur crested but had a different crest on his head. When I first saw Danni, he was cute as a button, but his looks paled in comparison to his personality. He bobbed his head up and down, danced back and forth on his perch and reached his foot out of the cage to get my attention. Danni was placed in the pet shop so he could find a new home. He obviously had decided I was to be his new Mommy, and I fell in love with him instantly. I was told he was a Ducorp's cockatoo, but at that point, I didn't care what he was. Danico Ian kept telling me, "Hello" and "I'm a good bird!"

I brought Danico Ian home with me and have never regretted that decision for a minute. Danni sings with me to our other bird brothers and sisters. He even barks at our dogs when they are outside playing. He talks to us each day and tells us about his adventures. It is in his own special language, but he is extremely animated and vocal when telling his tales. I have been blessed with a new grandson, and Danni is just smitten with him too! When we bring him (supervised) into our bird room, Danni jumps up and down for joy and shows off with all his tricks and antics.

I have several birds, but Danico Ian will always have a very special place in my heart because of his beauty, personality and love for life. I hope I am blessed enough to have him continue to be a part of our family for many more years to come!

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Daisy  
Courtesy Teresa Stanley, North Carolina

Daisy is a very special baby. In early June, I saw her picture on a website and knew she was the one for me. I drove two hours away to meet her. She was still too young to come home with me, but I made her mine that very day. Two weeks

later she was ready to come home. I was so excited to get her home and had made plans to do all the right things in her upbringing.

Unfortunately, fate doesn't always let us keep our well made plans. My elderly mom came to live with me in January. She was not in good health and I wanted her to be with me. She met Daisy and was as enchanted with her as was I. Two days after Daisy came to be with us, my mom was hospitalized. She was very ill and I was with her almost every minute of the five days she lived. Poor Daisy had come to a new environment and was almost alone the entire time! I was so torn and worried what the trauma would do to her.

What a blessing Daisy turned out to be for me! She learned to be independent, which is great as I do work outside the home. She was such a joy and comfort to me when I could have been very lonely and sad. We think we are taking these little guys in to be their protectors, when the truth is we get just as much, or more as in my case, than we give.

I had always read how special Goffin's cockatoos can be, and I can surely testify to that now. Daisy is a delight and my own special little angel. Plus, she is as comical as they come! But that's another story.

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Phoebe  
Courtesy Brenda Hegwood, Michigan

We have a Goffin's cockatoo named Phoebe. She is a sweet girl and loves to have her head petted and cuddle under my chin. We adopted her from a parrot rescue in our area, and she is a great addition to our family!

She asks, "How are you doing?" She calls for her daddy and mommy, and when she wants to go to sleep she says, "Nighty night." When my husband coughs, Phoebe coughs also, mimicking him.

Cockatoos are great pets. They are very loving and affectionate and love to be with those they love. I have a little song that I sing called "Phoebekins." Phoebe dances up and down on my hand when I ask her if she is ready to dance. Before she dances, I ask her if she is ready and she will reply, "Ready." She brings great joy to our lives.

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Harley Jean  
Courtesy Sammi DiTomaso, Florida

Harley came into our lives as a hatchling, breaking from her egg on the same day as my youngest daughter's birthday. Who would have thought that little bare-eyed cockatoo amass with matchstick like feathers protruding from an otherwise bare body would transform into such a little beauty? We went to bond with her at the aviary, learning to hand-feed her. It seemed like overnight we went to pick her up for the ride home and she was full of feathers, with a sweet personality.

We found out through DNA sexing that Harley was a she. So I aptly nicknamed her Harley Jean, giving some femininity to the name my husband, the motorcycle enthusiast named her at the time we bought her.

In only six weeks time, she learned to wave bye-bye. Then she said the words as she waved! She just thought she was something special with her antics. Not being much of a TV person, I love to listen to the stereo. Soon she was dancing around with me, following the beat of the music to my amazement. Now she even does the "Raise the Roof" move with her feathers, like she is at a rock concert!

Training her has been so simple, she's such a smart bird. I have a blue-and-gold macaw as well as an umbrella cockatoo, but Harley picks up tricks only after a few times showing her, and she does it for the attention. She has never required a treat or food reward, she just wants to hear her mommy go crazy with praise. In her short four years she has learned to roll over, nods Yes when you ask, "Are you pretty?" and when you ask her to show you how pretty, she spreads her wings wide as she can and tilts her head. She learned to put colored plastic coins in a slotted bank type box, but the box must be on a surface where she can hear them drop and hit the bottom, then she nods like her mommy does in approval of a job well done. Lastly, she likes to "play dead" leaning her head back as far as it will go when you turn her upside down in your hand.

I would say Harley is an attention hog, but she's the most quiet of the flock. When the macaw starts to screech and she wants to sleep, she says, "Stop it!" When it's time to get covered up and go to sleep, she always asks, "What are you doin', doin'?" When she wants out of the cage, she'll call out, "C'mon. Up! Up!"

I've owned parakeets when I was a small child and cockatiels as an adult, but this bare-eyed cockatoo has endeared herself into our family and made herself a precious gift in our lives. She loves to be around people and shows off. We even took her to visit our nephew's special education school so all the children could see her perform and ask questions about her and the other birds. She loved waving bye-bye to everyone, much to their delight!

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Peaches  
Courtesy Kristi Fore, Virginia

Peaches came to me quite by accident back in 1991. I had heard of a family who was desperately trying to get rid of a bird they had purchased on impulse to coordinate with their lovely living room and an old picture of a large white cockatoo. She was placed in a beautiful wooden antique cage, which she made into toothpicks in no time flat. While they were at work the next day, she decided to do some rearranging of the room full of antiques. She was banished to the basement, in a small parrot cage, and an ad was placed in the paper. I called the folks, wondering why they were getting rid of such a rare bird (Goffin's weren't very well known then in my town – still aren't) They told me the story of how "this thing" destroyed thousands upon thousands of dollars of antiques & collectables. I offered \$100 for her cage and supplies, and told them I'd take the bird, if they threw it in free. They agreed, and I took her home, with the plan to re-home her as soon as I found someone with knowledge of cockatoos. She has been with me ever since, and has really opened my eyes to the bird world. She is one of the reasons I now breed birds, as well as rescue them. She is a joy to be around, and loves our weekly outings to PetSmart to entertain and educate people of bird ownership and impulse purchases. She has also visited schools for pet awareness events. We wouldn't trade her for the world.

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Baby  
Courtesy Violet Lawhorn, Georgia

This is my bare-eyed cockatoo. I have had him since 1994. He is so cute, and he loves to take a shower. His favorite thing to do is play inside my shirt. Baby is 13 years old. He was my first cockatoo. Now, I have five cockatoos. I can hold him upside down, and he flings his head from side to side and in circles. Baby can be so funny at times. The funny thing is that I have my glasses on and hair in a ponytail. He does not like that and he will try to bite me. So I don't wear my hair that way very often because he can have a nasty bite. I love this guy with all my heart.

Buddy  
Courtesy Susan Mclean, Wyoming

I have a 3-year-old blue-eyed Goffin's cockatoo. I got him two years ago and he has been the love of our life. He is always doing something to make us laugh, like hanging upside down on his ropes or swinging on his swing real fast. He has learned to say, "Go night night" and "Go bye bye." He loves to sing along with you as you whistle, and he laughs whenever someone is laughing on TV. I don't know what I would do without him.

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